

the link

August
2012



VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System



5 biking to work



This month, VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's executive team is kicking off a new project. We are going to start blogging as a way to foster two-way communication with staff.

I must admit I was hesitant at first at the idea of writing a blog. But, after our public affairs team mentioned to me after several meetings, "this would be something great to blog about," I realized how this method of communication could benefit NWHCS employees as a team.

With each of the executive team members participating, the blog won't focus on just one area or one site. Each week it will update everyone on happenings across NWHCS.

I look forward to reading your comments and feedback. Please visit the blog site by clicking the link on the Intranet and take time to read our "rules of engagement." While we want to hear your feedback, we ask that comments stay on topic and are respectful of others. Also, please bear with us as we work this new task into our routine. The goal is to provide one update a week and respond to comments in a timely manner during normal duty hours.

One more idea about two way communication... I have had the privilege of sitting in on many staff meetings since I joined the NWI team. Through listening at staff meetings, I have learned so much about the excellent work we are doing. If I have not attended your staff meeting, and you would like me to do so, please let us know at ext. 3100 in Omaha.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marci Mylan".

DIRECTOR AND PUBLISHER

Marci Mylan, Ph.D., MHA

PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER

Will Ackerman

THE LINK EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor | Anna Morelock

Photographer | Bruce Thiel

Designer | Becky Brown

FACT: AS OF THE 2010 CENSUS, THERE WERE 1.5 MILLION WOMEN VETERANS IN THE U.S.

Cover: Seth Burmeister and Andy Englund, both from the Safety Program, set out from their office to pedal home after work. Both have been commuting via bicycle to and from work for about two years. Photo by Anna Morelock.

“Serving Veterans who have served us continues to be an honor. What we do matters very much.”

Kathy Bruning
Manager, Physical Medicine and
Rehabilitation Service | Omaha VAMC



the **link**

CONTENTS

Meet an Employee | Veterans Canteen Offers
Coupons for Homeless Veterans



Biking to Work Challenge



Outreach Efforts Give Veterans Valuable Information



Patient Centered Care Grapevine: Clinical Call Center



Valor Nursing Program



Empowering Women Within the Military and VA



Exploring Ancient Wars Allows Veterans to Heal Recent Wounds



VA Views | National Veterans Wheelchair Games



This magazine is an authorized publication for VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (VA NWIHCS). Contents of The Link are not necessarily the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, or the Department of Veterans Affairs. The editorial content of this publication is the responsibility of the VA NWIHCS Public Affairs Office.

CONTACT US

Have a story idea? Call the VA NWIHCS Public Affairs Office; Will Ackerman at 402-995-4719, Anna Morelock at 402-995-5547, or email vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov.

VISIT US ONLINE

Scan with your smart phone
to view more issues of
The Link online.



meet lucy schmitt

Mail/Reproduction
Clerk | Omaha VAMC

How long have you been at NWHCS?

"I've been here for five years. I was with food service before for three years and almost three years with the mailroom."

What does your job entail?

"I deliver mail for all of the hospital, inside and outside buildings. I do copy production for Omaha, Grand Island, Lincoln and all of the (Community-Based Outpatient Clinics). We cover Lincoln and Grand Island (for mail delivery) as needed."

Do you know how much mail goes through the mailroom every day?

"We deliver a lot. We do for sure average 500 or 600 letters a day, and then we have packages and FedEx, UPS. And, we do pharmacy."

What do you like best about your job?

"I really like my co-workers. They are really nice people to work with. The work environment is nice for us."


What are you doing when you're not at work?

"I love to spend time with my family. I love outdoor activities – fishing and hiking and camping. I love to go camping. I really love nature."

Are you a Veteran?

"No. I've been married to an Army Veteran for six years. I do like to work with the Veterans. I think they are very humble people, and I think they deserve everything. They put their lives out there so we can be free. I have a lot of respect for them."

What are your future goals?

"My goal, later on, is to work in the lab. I'd like to work in the medical field, so I'm trying to learn that area. I took some (classes) before but I need more training. I'm very comfortable (working around) blood. I'm not sure why; maybe because in my country I used to work for the vet. I used to give shots for the dogs, and put IVs in the dogs. Maybe that's why I like it, because I was exposed to something similar before." 

Veterans Canteen Service Offers Coupons for Homeless Veterans

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

Veterans Canteen Service is offering coupons for free products for Veterans participating in the Housing and Urban Development and VA Supportive Housing Program. The program, which began in 2011, allocated \$500,000 in promotional funds this year to support Veterans receiving the HUD-VASH vouchers for the first time.




Photo by Anna Morelock

VA NWHCS Director Dr. Marci Mylan and NWHCS Homeless Programs Coordinator Linda Twomey accept about \$300 worth of coupons for Veterans Canteen Service from VCS employee Rolland Adams and VCS Chief Roy Mills. The coupons will be handed out to Veterans signing leases for the first time through the Housing and Urban Development and VA Supportive Housing Program.

"A free meal and a few free items may not seem like much, but it can be a world of difference to a person getting back on their feet and seeking recovery and independence."

Marilyn Iverson
Department of Veterans Affairs, VCS Director

At VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, VCS Chief Roy Mills and VCS employee, Rolland Adams, presented about \$300 worth of \$20 coupons to Homeless Program Coordinator Linda Twomey and NWHCS Director Dr. Marci Mylan July 11. As the coupons are used up, Twomey will be able to request more from VCS until the \$500,000 has been distributed across VA.

Coupons will be presented to Veterans as they sign new leases through the HUD-VASH program and complete their first scheduled health care appointment through VA NWHCS. 

For more information about VCS, visit www.vacanteen.va.gov.



Information on VA homeless programs can be found at www.va.gov/homeless.



biking to work challenge

AN ALTERNATIVE DAILY COMMUTE FOR VA EMPLOYEES

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

after riding a bike to work for two years, it's just become a way of life for Seth Burmeister, Safety Program manager at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

Bob Yager, chief of Engineering, just started biking to work in June after an injury sidelined his ability to run for exercise. His competitive streak led him to the Activate Omaha Bicycle Commuter Challenge.

Yager sent an invitation to Burmeister to join the team. Burmeister rides to work with Andy Englund, VA NWIHCS' emergency preparedness coordinator. Englund joined the team, as well.

“Every time I invited one person, they had someone else they recommended.”

Bob Yager, VA NWIHCS Chief of Engineering and Team Captain ►



Photo by Anna Morelock

Seth Burmeister and Andy Englund set out for home after work. The Safety Program employees have been bicycling year-round to and from work for about two years. They recently joined a team with eight other NWIHCS employees to track the miles they ride to and from work for the Activate Omaha Bicycle Commuter Challenge.

► Through word of mouth, the team maxed out at 10 riders who log their daily commuter miles via smart phone or on the challenge website. During the challenge, which runs from May 1 to Aug. 31, the team has ridden almost 3,000 miles, burned almost 20,000 calories, saved more than 2,500 pounds of carbon monoxide and more than \$1,000 dollars in driving expenses. In June, the team was in third place out of 107 local teams.

Some bicycle commuters may only ride in the winter, but Burmeister and Englund ride throughout the year.

“We’ve ridden in snow, rain, sleet, pretty much everything. I think they plow the bike trails before they plow the streets.”

Seth Burmeister, VA NWIHCS Safety Program Manager

“You just have to be a little careful and slow down in the winter,” Englund said. (continued on page 14) ►

VA NWIHCS Bike Challenge Team

Bob Yager
Seth Burmeister
Andy Englund
Stephen Walls
Aaron Moore
Mark Tupper
Shaun Burdess
Bruce Wagner
Corri Synak
Jim Easton

Outreach efforts

MAKING VETERANS AWARE OF THEIR ELIGIBILITY FOR VA BENEFITS

more than 161,000 Veterans are estimated to live in the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System's 104 county service area. However, only about one-third of those are enrolled in and using their VA health care benefits.

Although some choose to use health care benefits provided through other means, many Veterans are not aware of VA benefits for which they are eligible.

This is why outreach has become an important mission for VA. ►

“We want to reach every eligible Veteran and orient them to our services and provide them personalized, proactive care to facilitate their health and well-being.”

Dr. Marci Mylan, Director VA NWIHCS



Photo by Will Ackerman

► Many service areas within VA NWIHCS proactively perform outreach.

Lori Wardlow manages the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn team. Her team's mission is to ensure Veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan are aware of, and gain access to, their VA benefits.

“A major focus for our team is to dispel myths about how difficult it is to get into care at the VA,” Wardlow said. “We also try to destigmatize perceptions and encourage returning Veterans to get help for mental health-related issues.”

Wardlow's team is representative of how outreach has become a prominent mission for VA in recent years. In 2003, there were two employees who performed outreach as an extra duty. Today, there are more than 20 employees including social workers and providers.

Mental Health Specialty Programs – which includes homeless Veteran support, Veterans Justice Outreach and Vocational Rehabilitation – has grown exponentially in recent years. Other outreach positions were added in the last three to four years, including suicide prevention, women Veterans programs, My HealtheVet and caregiver support. ►

Pat Vyhnaelek, a Veteran service representative at the Lincoln VA Regional Office, assists a Veteran during a Veterans of the Armed Forces Outreach Open House in York, Neb., in March.

Kelli Stott (right), Health Promotion Disease Prevention coordinator for VA NWIHCS, discusses healthy living with a guest at the 2012 Welcome Home event at the Lincoln VA Community-Based Outpatient Clinic June 23.

► Outreach includes presentations at returning servicemember post-deployment meetings, college Veteran support groups, Rotary and other community groups and Veteran service organizations.

"These outreach opportunities are important because there may be a returning servicemember who comes back and reintegrates into the community, and the people around him may have no clue what the Veteran is going through, or the difficulty he is having readjusting to civilian life after war," Wardlow said.

"It's important to keep the community engaged and educate them about the struggles that returning Veterans might have."

Lori Wardlow
Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation New Dawn
Outreach Manager

Collaboration also is important. NWIHCS hosts two annual programs that bring ►



Photo by Will Ackerman

Donna Higgins, Women Veterans Program coordinator, talks to a guest who stopped by the outreach booth at the Offutt Air Force Base Open House and Air Show in 2010.

► together health care system and community resources – the Welcome Home Event for returning combat Veterans and the Stand Down for homeless Veterans. These events bring together various VA NWIHCS programs under one roof, and partner with myriad community resources and Veteran service organizations.

Several VA NWIHCS staff members also joined forces with other VA programs three years ago to form a unique team called the Veterans of the Armed Forces Outreach Committee. This committee includes representatives from Wardlow's staff, public affairs, the women Veterans program, the Lincoln and Omaha Vet Centers, VA Regional Office in Lincoln and the Nebraska Guard Transition Assistance officer. The team conducts outreach open houses in collaboration with host-county Veteran service officers to reach Veterans in rural areas.

"It's a great opportunity for Veterans in our county to have multiple VA resources at a one-stop shop in one location," said Eric Mullally, Platte County Veteran county service officer. "This is important to educate the Veterans about what VA benefits are available to them, because many have no idea what they are eligible for."

The team held an outreach open house in Platte County in May.

The outreach team also joins forces to host information booths at other events including the Nebraska State Fair, health fairs, and the Offutt Air Force Base and Lincoln air shows. (continued on page 15) ►



Photo by Will Ackerman

Clinical Call Center:

MORE THAN A BANK OF PHONES

Michele O'Connor | Patient Centered Care
Training Coordinator

When a Veteran dials 402-346-8800 or 1-800-451-5796 during normal business hours and enters either "Option 2" for appointments or "Option 4" for problems or questions, exactly who answers the phone?

Five clerks, four licensed practical nurses and three registered nurses, all staff members of the Clinical Call Center at the Omaha VA Medical Center, are on hand to answer anything from routine appointment inquiries to complex health assessments. In the past, staff members have interacted with callers contemplating suicide. In one instance, a Veteran was having a stroke. One staff member kept him on the phone while another called an ambulance.

In June 2012 alone, approximately 9,000 calls were handled by the Clinical Call Center staff.

The Clinical Call Center was implemented about three years ago with the intent to improve how calls were answered and provide first-call resolution for Veterans, said Deb Shimerdla, registered nurse and associate chief of nursing for Ambulatory Care. She supervises the call center.

Today, the call center takes calls pertaining to all primary care clinics in Omaha, for services offered in Shenandoah and ►

► Bellevue community-based outpatient clinics and most specialty clinics. The advantages are clear: rather than calling the clinic directly where staff are busy taking care of patients, the call center has dedicated staff to get messages to providers, alleviate voice messages and ensure calls are resolved in one phone conversation. In the future, the goal is to route all services through the Clinical Call Center so Veterans would have to call only one number rather than multiple extensions for service – a true one-stop-shop.

“We have outstanding staff who are making a difference and caring for our Veterans. They are constantly looking for ways to improve service and increase customer satisfaction.”

Deb Shimerdla, RN, Associate Chief of Nursing for Ambulatory Care

(continued on page 14) ►



Photo by Anna Morelock

Cindy Zastoupil and Patricia Thompson, medical support assistants in the clinical call center, are just two of the employees who answer calls from Veterans with appointment queries and health questions.



The Patient-Centered Care Grapevine is a feature to highlight patient-centered care activities and training. Watch the Daily Briefs and the Intranet for this logo.

If your department or program has a unique way of being patient-centered and wants to be featured, contact Michele O'Connor in Omaha at ext. 5809 or micheleoconnor@va.gov.

For more patient-centered care information, visit the Intranet page at vawww.nebraska.va.gov/PCC.asp.

the chance to learn about surgery and get hands-on experience this summer brought three soon-to-be nurses to VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System.

The nursing students, who are all between their junior and senior years in college, were the first to participate in NWIHCS' Nursing Valor Program. Through the VA Healthcare Retention and Recruitment Office (HRRO), the Valor Program awarded VA NWIHCS three nursing spots in the program based on the needs of the medical center. VA NWIHCS nursing staff chose to place them in the operating room.

“Our workforce is, unfortunately, an aging workforce in the operating room. This was our opportunity to not only get nurses interested in perioperative care, but also have them look at VA as an employer of choice in the future.”

Tammy Bockman, VA NWIHCS Surgical Nurse Director



Photo by Anna Morelock



Photo by Anna Morelock

“Our goal for this program was to use it as a way to get someone experience, and to also draw young nurses into the perioperative field because they don’t get much of this in their regular school,” Bockman said.

Shanelle Stech, a nursing student from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, said she completed a 16-hour program in Lincoln, but all she got to do was watch the nurses as they worked. *(continued on page 14)*

Shantelle Stech, Jamie Brandt and Melissa Galvan scrub in for their day in the operating room. The three nurses work with their NWIHCS preceptors as a part of the Valor Program.

Shantelle Stech (above), a nursing student at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, unwraps a sterile basin while setting up an operating room.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

Within the Military and VA

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

S Since the American Revolution, women have played various roles in the armed forces and the Department of Veterans Affairs. From saboteurs, nurses, cooks and laundresses in 1775 to the first female four-star general in 2008, women continue to reach "firsts." While they've come a long way, servicewomen are still restricted from serving in some areas of the military. In honor of Women's Equality Day, below are just a few facts about women's journey to equality.

1848 The first women's rights convention is held in Seneca Falls, N.Y.

1866 Dr. Mary Walker receives the Medal of Honor. She is the only woman to receive the nation's highest military honor.

1920 The 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution grants women the right to vote.

1941 Women leave their homes in droves after Pearl Harbor to join the military, to work in navy yards and airplane factories, to fly planes, to build bombs, to provide medical and nursing care to Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines, and more.

1946 Eleven female doctors are hired by VA in November 1946 to care for women Veterans.

1948 The Women's Armed Services Integration Act grants women permanent status in the regular and reserve forces of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps, as well as in the newly created Air Force.

1949 The first African-American women enlist in the Marine Corps.


1962 Valerija B. Raulinaitis, M.D. (1915-2004), (pictured above) is the first woman appointed as chief of staff at a VA hospital.

1967 Legal provisions placing a 2 percent cap on the number of women serving in the military and a ceiling on the highest grade a women can achieve are repealed.

1971 Valerija B. Raulinaitis, M.D., becomes the first female director of a VA hospital.

1977 Military Veteran status is granted to the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) who flew during World War II.

1980 The first women graduate from the service academies.

2011 Women represent 59.6 percent of VA's permanent workforce, compared to their expected representation rate of 64.8 percent. Women represent approximately 62.8 percent of VA's leadership pipeline (GS/GM 12, 13, and 14), but only 35 percent of the senior leadership ranks (GS-15 and Senior Executive Service). As of 2011, there are more than 1.8 million women Veterans, representing 8.3 percent of the total Veteran population. 



To take part in the Women's Special Emphasis Program at VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, contact Equal Employment Opportunity Officer Laura Neal at 402-995-3109 or laura.neal@va.gov.

Facts are from the Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation and the Department of Veterans Affairs. Visit www.womensmemorial.org/Education/timeline.html



exploring ancient wars allows

Veterans to Heal Recent Wounds

Anna Morelock | Public Affairs

an army commander home from 10 years of war finds his wife having an affair - with his cousin.

The wife has been nursing a grudge from the incident that began the war – her husband killed their daughter. As a welcome home gift, the wife kills her husband and is later killed herself by their son out for revenge. How can this family get out of its cycle of revenge?

This plot and others are included in a group of Greek plays that will be discussed in an upcoming four-session book group at the Lincoln Community-Based Outpatient Clinic. While the plays may be ancient, the topics and ideas raised still resonate today.

Besides the book group, the project, Ancient Greeks, Modern Lives: A National Conversation, also will include a lecture, ►

► an acting workshop and a dramatic reading by a New York theater group.

The project is one of many across the country organized by the Aquila Theater Group, which received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to partner with 100 different classics professors in 100 towns to bring discussions and performances of Greek drama to the public. Dr. Anne Duncan, associate professor and vice chair, Department of Classics and Religious Studies at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, was chosen to coordinate the project in Lincoln.

While Veterans in Nebraska are the main audience, the public is welcome to the events. Duncan chose to highlight Veterans because, she said, the material from ancient Greece that is near and dear to her heart revolves around the Trojan War and issues of war.

Duncan partnered with Dr. Christine Emler, associate chief of medicine at the Lincoln CBOC, to bring the events to VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System (NWIHCS). Such activities are a part of patient-centered care and focus on the patient as a whole person and not just a disease, Emler said.

“I think the arts, whether it’s in the form of music or in written art or dramatic art or photography, I think that certainly gets to the Veteran as a whole person.”

Dr. Christine Emler
Associate Chief of Medicine | Lincoln CBOC

(continued on page 15) ►



Stock Photo

SELECTED PLAYS

Books Will be Provided

All groups will be held at 7 p.m. in the Lincoln Director's Conference Room (Room 107).

Aug. 22:

Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. Lombardo

Sept. 19:

Aeschylus, *Oresteia*, trans. Meineck

Oct. 17:

Sophocles, *Ajax*, *Electra*, and *Philoctetes*, trans. Meineck and Woodruff

Nov. 28:

Euripides, *Herakles Gone Mad*, trans. Meagher

HELLO

June 3 to July 14

Lee Arnold, Outpatient Care
Jeremy Boehme, Pharmacy
Kay Boettcher McGann, Extended Care
Patricia Bohart, Mental Health
Jamie Brandt, Surgery
Amy Brown, Veterans Engineering Resource Center
Zach Clark, Business Office
Adam Crabbe, Pharmacy
Ryan Croghan, Sterile Processing Service
Brian Delaney, Fee Basis
Vita Derun, Surgery
Bradley Devrieze, Fee Basis
Julie Dickson, Mental Health
Kimberly Downs, Pharmacy
Thomas Ferlic, Fee Basis
Russell Francis, Inpatient Care
Jill Freitas, Surgery
Melissa Galvan, Surgery
Patricia Gill, Fee Basis
William Hammett, Surgery
Stephanie Hartman, Fee Basis
Brian Hollis, Fee Basis

Elizabeth Jamieson, Pharmacy
Amy Killeen, Fee Basis
Benjamin Maisenbach, Pharmacy
Jenna Mann, Pharmacy
William McCune, Pharmacy
Tamara Mielock, North Platte CBOC
Lindsay Northam, Fee Basis
Jennifer Oseka, Mental Health
Vanessa Quevedo-Wools, Veterans Canteen Service
Allison Ramey, Fee Basis
Michele Reuter, Surgery
Troy Schulz, Mental Health
Stephen Solsky, Extended Care
Shanelle Stech, Surgery
Hannah Stephenson, Inpatient Care
Victoria Tomanek, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
Lynda Vonderlage, Mental Health
Kathleen Wallace, Pharmacy
Elizabeth Welch, Pharmacy

Clifford Brandy, Sterile Processing Service
Anna Jeanette Brosman, Human Resources
Brent Cernik, Pharmacy
Eric Curtis, Prosthetics
Don Fernandez, Fee Basis
Susan Fry, Pharmacy
Betty Govier, Mental Health
Ryan Hudson, Inpatient Care
Michael King, Imaging
Robert Peirce, Business Office
Linda Phan, Pharmacy
Megan Rustad, Pharmacy
Dawn Tanner, Mental Health
Patricia Tyler, Veterans Engineering Resource Center
Vithyalakshmi Selvaraj, Mental Health
Monique Smith, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
Keith Weeks, Primary Care and Specialty Medicine
James Young, Veterans Canteen Service

GOODBYE

June 3 to July 14

Warren Ancheta-Thorp, Fee Basis
Robert Bertellotti, Surgery

Food Pantry FOR VETERANS

First and Third Wednesdays
of every month (Closed Aug. 15)
10 a.m. to Noon.

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System
Building D-Veterans Resource and Referral Center
4101 Woolworth Avenue
Omaha, Nebraska

Available Items:

- Canned foods, grains, meats and bread
- Fresh produce is available when it is in season
- Hygiene products are also available upon request

Eligible Veterans:

Veterans who live in Nebraska, who are low-income, near homeless, or homeless who are not living in a shelter. Veterans must show a valid state identification card or a piece of mail postmarked within the past 60 days that contains their name and Nebraska address.



The pantry is co-sponsored by:
VA Nebraska-Western Iowa
Health Care System and
Together, inc., of Omaha.



what do you do to beat the HEAT?



"I stay in a cool place."

Carmella Schroeder
Work Controller,
Engineering | Omaha VAMC



"Stay inside and drink lots of ice water. And, if you have to go out, run your errands in the morning or evening."

Quin Kelly
Employee Health
Promotion, Disease
Prevention Coordinator
Omaha VAMC/Lincoln CBOC



"Slather on the sunscreen and head to the nearest body of water – Sherman Lake."

Joy Quinn
Radiology
Technologist | Grand
Island CBOC



"Dress lightly. And, coincidentally, I have to keep the walk-in freezers and refrigerators clean for the Veterans."

Kelvin Roberts
Food Service | Grand
Island CBOC



"Stay in the air conditioning and drink lots of cold beverages."

Lori Dierking
Clinical Applications
Coordinator, Quality,
Lincoln CBOC

National Veterans Wheelchair Games

life without limitations

Will Ackerman | Public Affairs

having an injury or disability does not mean life must slow down. Ask four local Veteran athletes who competed in the 32nd Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Richmond, Va., June 25 to 29.

Great Plains Paralyzed Veterans of America chapter members Randy Squier, Craig Enenbach, Michael Moore and Roy Gray joined more than 500 Veterans who competed in this multi-event sports and rehabilitation program for Veterans who use wheelchairs.

The sports competition, co-hosted by the Department of Veterans Affairs and PVA, is designed to improve the quality of life for Veterans who have spinal cord injuries, amputations or certain neurological problems.

Competitive events at the National Veterans Wheelchair Games include air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, *(continued on page 15)* ►




Courtesy Photo

Great Plains Paralyzed Veterans of America members Roy Clark, Craig Enenbach, and Randy Squier celebrate success at the 32nd Annual National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Richmond, Va.

► *Call Center continued from page 8*

The call center is a Veteran's best resource during the day if they have a concern or problem that cannot wait until their next appointment. The center has access to available same-day service slots if an immediate appointment is warranted. Staff also monitor waitlists and cancellations to make sure additional appointment times are filled as they become available.

Walking in without an appointment is often risky since physician availability is limited, so calling prior to coming in will save Veterans time and avoid hassles. The hospital averages about 600 walk-ins a month, which sometimes makes it difficult to meet the needs of Veterans efficiently. Calling the call center before coming in is a better option to secure timely service. 

After 4 p.m. weekdays and on weekends and holidays, Veterans should call the Nurse VA Advice Line at 1-866-687-7382.

► *Valor Nursing Program continued from page 9*


In the Valor Program, Stech not only got to watch the procedures and surgeries, but she also got to do everything the nurses did, with supervision. The opportunity, she said, confirmed her choice of perioperative nursing, and made her want to do it more.

Not only have the students been learning, but it's also been a great opportunity for the operating room staff, said Eileen Broich, Operating Room manager.

“Staff have been extremely enthusiastic about educating and developing teaching materials. A lot of staff have really stepped up. It's been a really good growth opportunity for individuals and for teamwork.”


Eileen Broich, VA NWIHCS Operating Room Manager

Stech was joined in the program by Jamie Brandt, a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and Melissa Galvan, a student at Creighton University. While in the operating room for the summer, the students were assigned to registered nurses who acted as their mentors. Those nurses included Stefanie Venner, Becky Rohe and Matt Escritt.

While the nursing team will have Valor positions open for the next four years, each year they will evaluate where nursing staff is needed most. This year's Valor Program nurses each spent 400 hours working in the operating room over the summer. When they graduate in May, if there are nursing positions open at NWIHCS, the nurses will be able to apply and count their 400 hours toward training in their new jobs. 

► *Bicycle Commuter Challenge continued from page 5*

In the summer when it's so hot, it's not so bad when riding and the wind is blowing on you, Englund said. In the winter, the exertion keeps you warm.

Englund and Burmeister ride about half of their 10-mile commute on bike trails and the other half on the roads. When the east to west bike trail is finished in Omaha this summer, Yager said his whole eight-mile trip will be on trails. 

To view a map of the trails in Omaha and surrounding area visit
www.activateomaha.org/downloads/OmahaBikeMap2010-05-05.pdf



EVENTS what's going on?

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| Aug. 1 | Farmer's Market, Lincoln |
| Aug. 7 | Farmer's Market, Omaha |
| Aug. 7 | Purple Heart Day |
| Aug. 8 | Farmer's Market, Lincoln |
| Aug. 14 | Farmer's Market, Omaha |
| Aug. 15 | Farmer's Market, Lincoln |
| Aug. 15 | Veterans Forum, Lincoln |
| Aug. 21 | Farmer's Market, Omaha |
| Aug. 21 | Purple Heart 230th Birthday Celebration, Lincoln |
| Aug. 22 | Farmer's Market, Lincoln |
| Aug. 26 | Women's Equality Day |
| Aug. 28 | Farmer's Market, Omaha |
| Aug. 29 | Farmer's Market, Lincoln |
| Aug. 31 | Women's Equality Day Program, Omaha |

**For more information
about VA NWIHCS events,
visit www.nebraska.va.gov.**



► *Wheelchair Games continued from page 13*

field events, handcycling, a motorized wheelchair rally, nine-ball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting and weightlifting. Athletes compete in events against others with similar athletic ability, competitive experience or age.

“Whether you get a medal, that is secondary to everyone encouraging each other to do well.”

Randy Squier
President | Great Plains PVA Chapter

Although he won three gold and one silver medal, he said the camaraderie among the Veterans was more important. Squier said he, like many of the repeat competitors, feel it is important to be examples to first-time competitors about overcoming their disabilities and living life to the fullest.

“There are always people that we can inspire,” he said.

The event is not just a sporting event. It’s part of exposing Veterans to VA and PVA programs.

“The idea behind our events is to get Veterans involved in adaptive sports as part of their rehabilitation,” said Jordan Schupach, public affairs officer for the VA’s National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events. “It’s a different way for them to be challenged, to face their disability head on and ultimately to achieve their personal bests. That’s the meaning behind our office’s slogan: Mission ReDefined.”

For more information on VA adaptive sports program, visit www.va.gov/adaptivesports.



► *Greek Plays continued from page 11*

“I also truly believe that health is not just the absence of disease,” Emler said. “So, using the creative arts to help improve communication, to help improve relationships, to help improve Veterans’ health, is a good thing.”

For those who may be intimidated at the thought of reading Greek plays, Duncan said, don’t be. She said her students usually say, “The names are kind of weird and hard to remember, but the stories are amazing. And, in a way, they feel kind of familiar, because Greek drama is one of the things that’s an ancestor to our own drama.

“Beyond that, it’s free,” she said. “What do you have to lose?”

For more information, call 402-489-3802, ext. 7879 for Rob McCrory or 800-451-5796 ext. 5547 for Anna Morelock.

► *Outreach continued from page 7*

A new initiative launched in July within NWIHCS will focus on synchronizing the different outreach resources available within the health care system. The Outreach and Retention Committee serves a dual purpose: increase awareness about VA benefits to ensure Veterans know what is available to them, and retain Veterans once they are enrolled so the VA becomes their provider of choice.

It will serve a similar function as other outreach initiatives. However, one of the newer aspects of the committee will be to highlight and provide resources to other NWIHCS employees who have interactions with Veterans so they can be ambassadors for VA. The committee also will open opportunities for more employees to become involved in performing outreach.

“Our employees at NWI are the best ambassadors for the high quality care provided to Veterans. Our employees live and tell the NWI story.”

Dr. Marci Mylan

To learn how you can get involved in NWIHCS’ outreach programs, contact public affairs at vhanwipublicaffairs@va.gov or call 800-451-5796 ext. 4719.

VA NWIHCS is now engaging Veterans through Twitter and Facebook



www.twitter.com/VANWIHCS



www.facebook.com/NebraskalowaVA

Watch for news, patient information and upcoming events.



ACCESS: Women's Health

At VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System, we recognize the service and sacrifices of our women Veterans. To access VA health care designed specifically for women, contact the Women Veterans Health Coordinator for Nebraska and Western Iowa at 402-995-4906

ex·cel·lence [ek-suh-luh'ns], *n.*, **1.** the fact or state of excelling; superiority; eminence. **2.** an excellent quality or feature. **3. VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System** —Syn. **1.** preeminence. **2.** merit, virtue.



VA
HEALTH
CARE | Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century



VA
HEALTH
CARE

Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

402-346-8800 | 1-800-451-5796

www.nebraska.va.gov